DEC. NO. 14

THIS MAGAZINE IS

HAUNTED

HEART OF ICE

By John Martin

EPH STANTON frowned. He looked at Ed Gribble, and in Ed's eyes was a kind of fear. He couldn't understand it. Ed was a big man, a giant of muscle, bone and brawn. It was Ed who had chased, thrown and tied a runaway bull last year in his own south pasture. It was Ed who was strong enough to break a man—any man—in two with his hands. It was Ed who was brave enough to face an escaped lunatic with a gun in his hands and take it away from him.

And now Ed was telling him he was afraid of a little old woman weighing less than ninety pounds. A woman whose face was so mild and so meek that one hesitated to breathe too heavily in her presence for fear she might blow away.

But in Ed Gribble's eyes was a look of near-terror.

"You better leave Miss Alice alone," he said. "She knows too much about things."

"She's a dirty old menace to the public health!" Eph snorted.

Ed glanced over toward the small, hut-like cottage that Miss Alice lived in. Through the falling snow, its threadbare ugliness was softened.

"The kids like her," he said in a low voice. "She lets 'em play in her front yard." He jerked a finger toward the snowman standing before the cottage. "Keeps 'em out of mischief."

"Ed, you're throwing more bull than even you could handle," Eph said. "You know what they say about Alice Markham—that she's a witch, that she brews poisons and sells 'em to people." He grinned broadly. "'Course nobody believes that." His voice hardened. "But people do talk, Ed. She does mix stuff up in pots in that busted old fireplace. And she mutters stuff nobody can understand. All I want is to get her off that land and put away where she can't hurt anybody. You talk about the kids playin' there . . ." He paused pointedly. "Who knows what she's liable to do some day? Any day what's left of her mind might go bust!"

Ed Gribble shook his head.

"Not Miss Alice," he said firmly. "Not her." His voice was almost reverent. "Miss Alice can do lots of good things. She saved my life, once, when even Doc Ratcliffe gave me up. Gave me somethin'. I dunno what it was, but it saved my life."

"If she saved your life, why are you so afraid of her?" Eph asked.

Ed Gribble gazed with respect at the tiny cottage.

"Because, like I said, she knows things. There's nothin' can harm Miss Alice." He shuddered. "And I wouldn't want to be the man who tried." He turned his eyes on Eph Stanton. "I got an idea that anybody bothers her—they won't last long."

Ed Gribble turned and shuffled off, down past the fence to his own land and vanished behind the falling snow.

Eph Stanton grunted. Only two days before, at the county seat, he'd got a secret tip from a friend of his high in the county government that the new super-highway was going to run right through Alice Markham's land. From nothing its value would skyrocket to something like a hundred thousand dollars. That kind of money Eph couldn't see going into any pocket but his own.

From where he stood he regarded the distant cottage narrowly. His original idea had been to have Ed Gribble join him in signing a petition to commit Alice Markham to the county insane asylum. With the woman incarcerated there would be a forced sale of the land for taxes—and Eph didn't doubt that he could bid it in. Committing her would have been easy. For years there had been rumors around the village about Alice Markham. Some said she was a witch. Some said she was worse, that she sold poison potions. But now there would be no time to get anybody else to sign a petition. And every second was precious.

His mouth working in fury, seeing a hundred thousand dollars slipping from his grasp, Eph Stanton came to a sudden decision. He looked around cautiously. Ed Gribble was nowhere in sight. In all that landscape of falling snow no single thing alive moved. With an abrupt movement he vaulted his own fence and came to rest on Alice Markham's land. Beyond, the tiny cottage was visible through the falling snow. Nothing could be simpler than to break in, snap her neck like a piece of straw and set the cottage afire. A body consumed to ashes would leave no evidence of murder. And with Alice Markham once dead, the land would simply be sold for taxes.

He strode up to the doorway, passing the

(Continued on inside back cover)

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED

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STEVE DRUMMOND HAD LOST EVERYTHING ---HIS WIFE AND CHILD, HIS JOB, HIS HOME, HIS HOPE! HE FELT AS IF HE WERE BEING HOUNDED BY SOME EVIL FATE

DIDN'T GET THIS JOB, EITHER... I'VE NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR! WH-WHAT...? IT---IT SEEMS AS IF SOMETHING IS PULLING ME---OVER THIS SILL! I---I FEEL A TERRIBLE IMPULSE---TO JUMP!

STOP THAT MAN, SOMEBODY! HE'S GOING TO JUMP!

GET OUT OF THE WAY! SOMEONE'S FALLING!

DON'T ASK QUESTIONS ---JUST RUN!

AIEEE!

STEVE DRUMMOND'S SHATTERED BODY WOULD

HORROR ENOUGH TO THE CROWD BELOW!

BUT THEY WERE EVEN MORE HORRIFIED TO SEE HIM RISE TO HIS FEET UNHURT!

HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SMASHED TO A PULP!

IT---IT CAN'T BE! I'M ALIVE! I'M---I'M NOT EVEN HURT!

EEEE!

BUS STOP

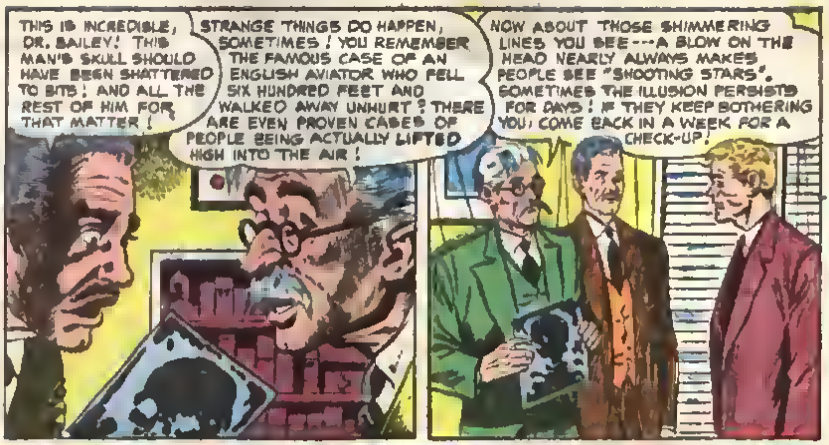
BUT EVERYTHING LOOKS SO STRANGE! THOSE FAINT, SHIMMERING LINES... THEY MUST BE AN OPTICAL ILLUSION OF SOME SORT! THE FALL MUST HAVE AFFECTED MY EYES!

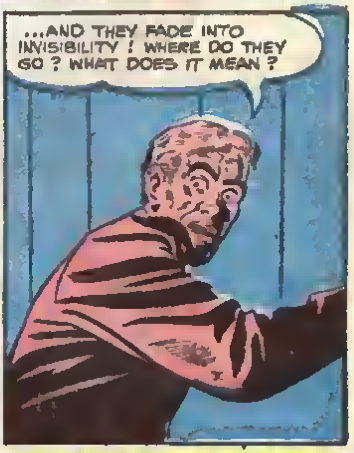
YOU OUGHT TO BE DEAD, MAC! WHAT HAPPENED? I ALREADY CALLED AN AMBULANCE! YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO A HOSPITAL AND LET THEM LOOK YOU OVER, AT LEAST! THAT WINDOW WAS FORTY STORIES UP!

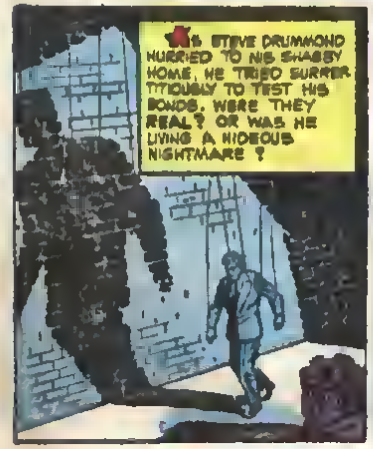
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT MYSELF! IT FELT AS IF SOMETHING WERE HOLDING ME UP! OFFICER, DO YOU SEE THESE STRANGE, SHINING LINES... FASTENED TO MY HANDS?

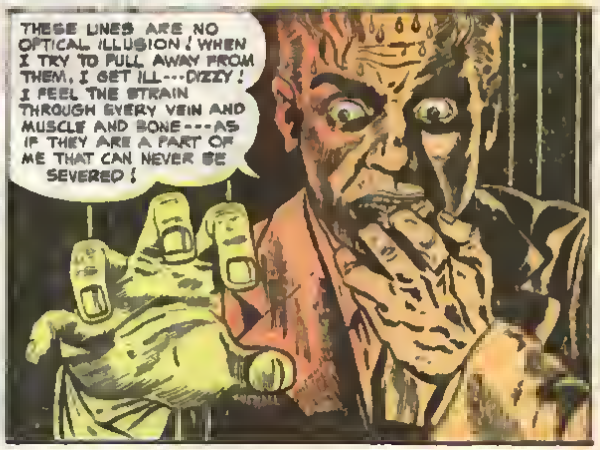
THAT QUESTION ALMOST LANDED STEVE DRUMMOND IN A MENTAL OBSERVATION WARD! BUT HE TALKED THE POLICEMEN INTO LETTING HIM GO TO SEE HIS OWN OLD FRIEND, DR. BAILEY!

HOURS LATER...



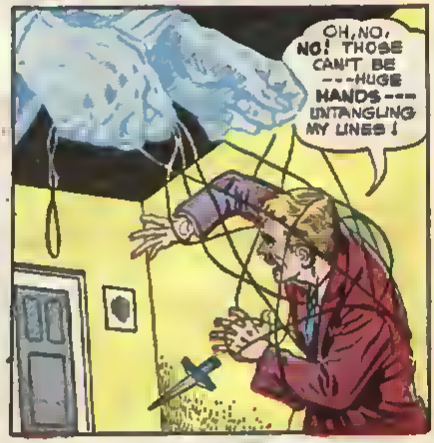


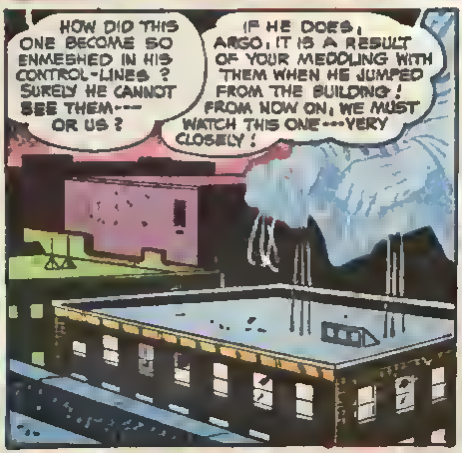




SUICIDE WAS FAR FROM STEVE DRUMMOND'S THOUGHTS NOW! HE HAD SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR ONCE MORE—HIS FRENZIED DETERMINATION TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF THE LINES!

PULLING, CONTORTING, TWISTING, STEVE DRUMMOND TRIED TO WREST HIS BODY FREE FROM THE FETTERING BANDS---GRINDING HIS TEETH TOGETHER AS HIS SCREAMING MUSCLES PROTESTED! SUDDENLY...





BLINDLY, HIS BRAIN A MAELSTROM, STEVE RUSHED TO A NEARBY PARK ...THEN HIS MIND REELED WITH SHOCK AS HE SAW, FAR ABOVE, WHERE THE LINES ENDED!

WH-WHAT...? OH, NO, IT CAN'T BE! HUGE THINGS ---HORRORS! MONSTROUS SHADOWS HOLDING THOSE LINES AS THAT BOY HOLDS HIS DOG ON A LEASH! DOES THIS EXPLAIN THE GLIMPSES MEN HAVE HAD OF DJINNS AND DEMONS?

WHEN SLOWLY, FEARFULLY, STEVE DRUMMOND TURNED...LOOKED UP...UP...UP! AND ABOVE HIM TOWERED THE PHANTOM-LIKE MONSTROSITY THAT HELD HIM A DESPERATELY UNWILLING CAPTIVE!

NO! I HOPE I AM MAD! RATHER THAT, THAN BE IN THE POWER OF THAT HIDEOUS MONSTER! I HAVE AN OVER-POWERING FEELING OF DANGER! I MUST DRAG MY GAZE AWAY---NOT LET HIM KNOW THAT I CAN SEE HIM!

WHAT WERE THEY? AND WHERE AND WHY? STEVE KNEW THAT ONLY HE COULD FIND OUT! IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS HE WANDERED IN STRANGE PLACES... HE FOLLOWED THE SIRENS OF POLICE CARS; HE FREQUENTED DARK ALLEYS AND BUSY HIGHWAYS...HE EVEN MADE A QUICK FLIGHT ACROSS THE SEA!

ALL OVER THE WORLD ...IT'S THE SAME! MEN ARE BEING CONTROLLED! MADE TO DO THINGS!

THAT SOUND---IS IT POSSIBLE? THEY ARE LAUGHING!

HAH HAH

UTTER HORROR CLUTCHED AT HIS HEART, AS THE INCREDIBLE AND TERRIBLE TRUTH MADE ITSELF MORE AND MORE UNDENIABLE!

THERE CAN BE NO MORE DOUBT---WE ARE PUPPETS! OUR MINDS, OUR BODIES ARE CONTROLLED BY DARK, SINISTER SHADOWS THAT MAN CANNOT SEE OR UNDERSTAND! HOW CAN WE GET FREE? I MUST HAVE HELP!

BUT WHERE COULD HE GO FOR HELP? WHO WOULD BELIEVE HIM? HE TRIED ONE PLACE AFTER ANOTHER!

INCREDIBLE!

THROW THIS CRANK OUT!

YOU SHOULD SEE A PSYCHIATRIST, MR. DRUMMOND!

AND NOW HIS OWN LIFE WAS IN DANGER! FOR STEVE DRUMMOND'S ACTIVITIES HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED!

WHEN MEN COULD SEE THE LINES, THEY COULD ACT WITH PARTIAL FREEDOM! SO THAT ALL WHO SAW--- MUST DIE!

THEY PULLED ME IN FRONT OF THAT CAR! THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL ME! THEN THERE MUST BE A WAY TO ESCAPE FROM THEM! PERHAPS EVEN TO DESTROY THEM!

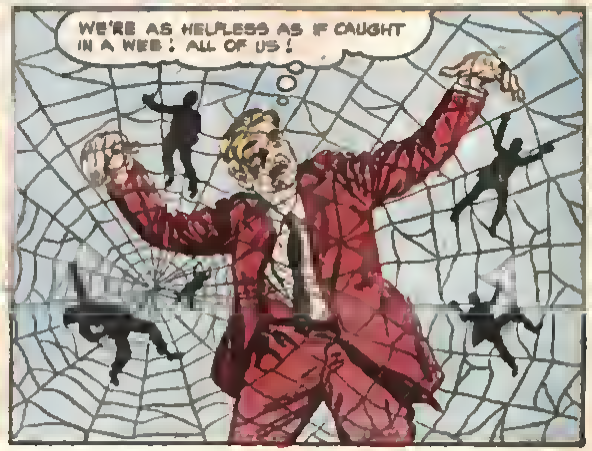
GOT TO LIVE--- LONG ENOUGH--- TO TELL PEOPLE! MAYBE--- THE NEWSPAPERS?

EVEN IF YOUR STORY WERE TRUE, WE WOULDN'T DARE TO PRINT IT! IT WOULD CAUSE A WORLD PANIC THAT WOULD---

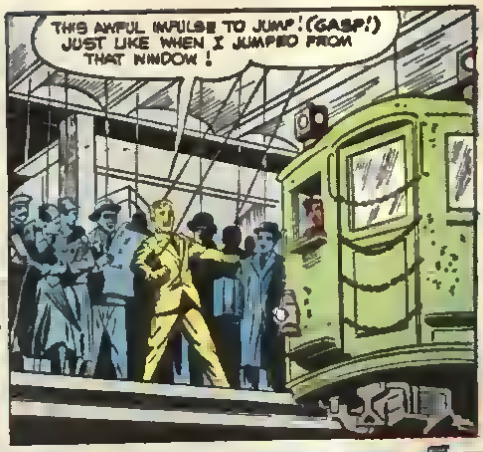
TH-THEY'RE MAKING ME HIT YOU! I C-CAN'T KEEP FROM IT!
UGH!

SNATCHING A GUN FROM HIS DESK, THE ANGRY EDITOR FOUND HIMSELF FIRING WILDLY AT HIS ASSAILANT!
STOP THAT MAN! HE'S A DANGEROUS MADMAN! HE'S GOT TO BE LOCKED UP!
BANG
STOP IT, MAN! THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT! THEY WANT YOU TO KILL ME--- OR HAVE ME LOCKED UP! THROW THAT GUN DOWN!

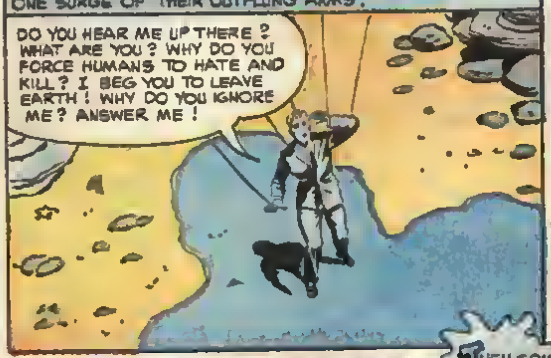
LET HIM GO!... WHY DID I TRY TO KILL THAT MAN? I MUST HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY INSANE!
HE THREW THE GUN AT ME! I'LL TAKE IT ALONG ---IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY!


WE'RE AS HELPLESS AS IF CAUGHT IN A WEB! ALL OF US!

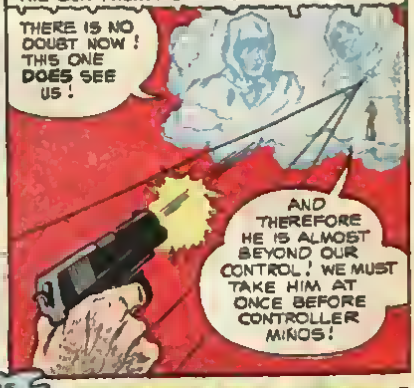
BUT STEVE FOUND THAT EACH STRUGGLE AGAINST THE MACABRE MASTERMINDS LEFT HIM **STRONGER**--- MORE ABLE TO RESIST THEIR GHASTLY DIABOLIC SCHEMES! IF HE COULD ONLY GET INTO COMMUNICATION WITH THEM! WHY NOT TRY? HE KNEW A LONELY BEACH ...



SHAKEN BY HIS NEAR ESCAPE FROM DEATH, STEVE MADE HIS WAY TO THE DESOLATE COAST! HIS KNEES TREMBLED AS HE NERVED HIMSELF TO CHALLENGE THE SHADOWY POWERS THAT HE KNEW COULD REND HIM ASUNDER WITH ONE SURGE OF THEIR OUTFLUNG ARMS!

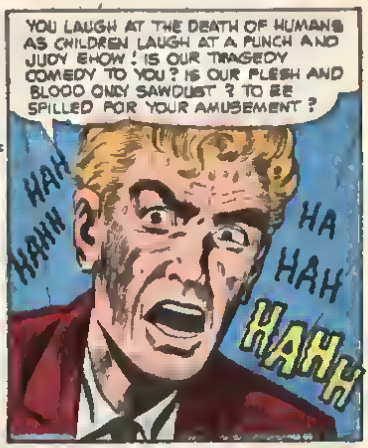


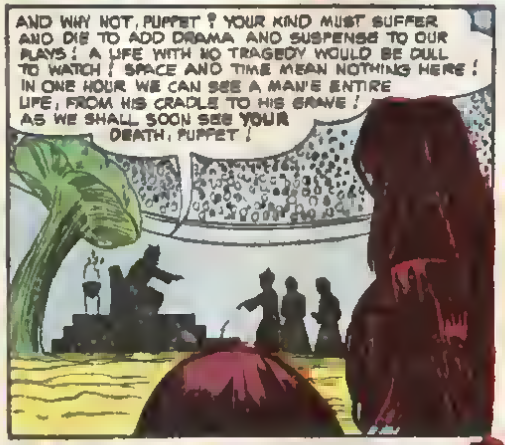
FINALLY, RENDERED ALMOST HYSTERICAL WITH RAGE AT THEIR SILENCE, STEVE DREW THE GUN FROM HIS POCKET AND FIRED!

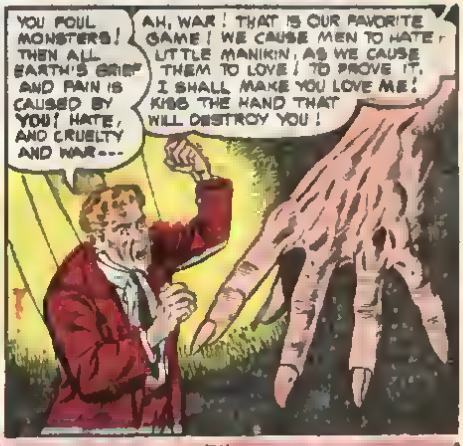


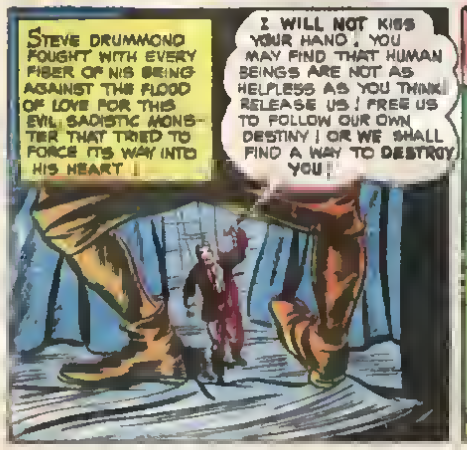
WHEN STEVE DRUMMOND RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS, HE WAS IN AN ENORMOUS, EERIE AMPHITHEATER! GROTESQUE FIGURES WERE WATCHING DRAMATIC SCENES TAKING PLACE ON A CIRCLE OF---EARTH!
WH-WHERE AM I? AIEEEEEEE! HUNDREDS OF THEM!
GREAT MINOS, THIS MANIKIN IS OUT OF ORDER! HAVE I YOUR PERMISSION TO DISPOSE OF HIM IN THE USUAL WAY?
NOT SO FAST, ARGO! THESE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES FROM EARTH MAY CAUSE SUSPICION! HAVE YOU BROKEN A RULE? HOW DID THIS MANIKIN GET OUT OF CONTROL?
CONTROLLER MINOS---I HAD SUCCESSFULLY DRIVEN THIS MANIKIN TO SUICIDE FOR THE CLIMAX OF MY NEXT PLAY! THEN SUDDENLY IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT IT MIGHT BE AMUSING TO PULL UP ON HIS LINES ---- AFTER HE JUMPED! UNFORTUNATELY, THIS WEAKENED HIS LINES, AND---AND ALSO HE GOT A SLIGHT BLOW ON THE HEAD---FROM THE FALL---
AND HE SAW US! AND THOSE WHO SEE THE IDS CAN DESTROY THE IDS!
DIE, TRAITOR!
GREAT MINOS--- HAVE MERCY--- LRRGLLGHL!
STRANGE AND UNEARTHLY COLDNESS CREPT OVER STEVE DRUMMOND'S BODY AS THE GREAT ID'S EYES FASTENED UPON HIM!
AND NOW, I, MYSELF, SHALL DESTROY THIS UNRULY PUPPET! HE HAS DISCOVERED THE MOST CAREFULLY GUARDED SECRET ON EARTH---AND HE MUST DIE FOR HIS ARROGANCE!
WAIT! I AM NO PUPPET---I AM A HUMAN BEING! A MAN! I BEG OF YOU TO LET ME RETURN TO EARTH! DROP MY LINES AND LET ME GO!

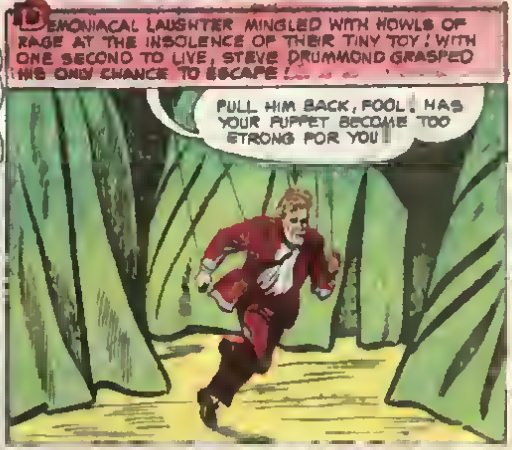
STEVE KNEW THAT IN THAT PITILESS CIRCLE OF LIGHT HE HAD BEEN REAL DEATH ON THE REAL EARTH OF REAL HUMANS OBLIVIOUS OF THE INHUMAN MONSTERS ABOVE THEM ! THEN, SUDDENLY, GARGANTUAN, SPINE-CHILLING LAUGHTER BEAT UPON HIM FROM ALL SIDES !

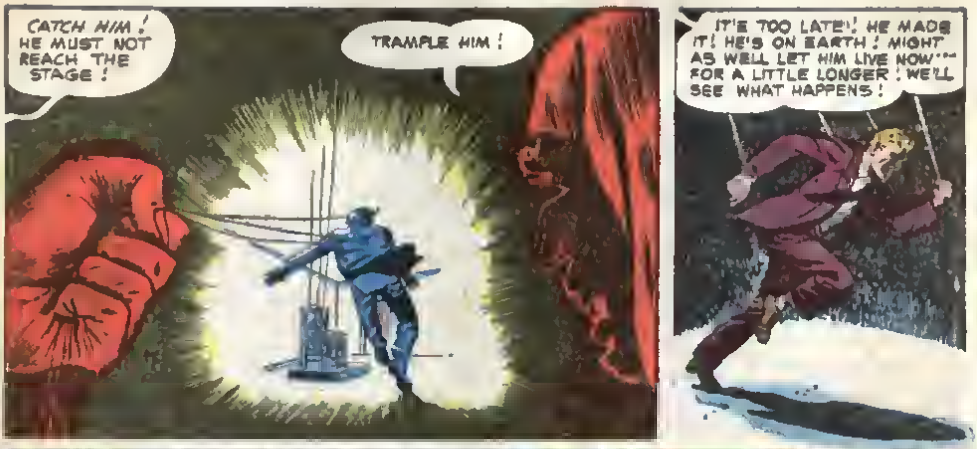






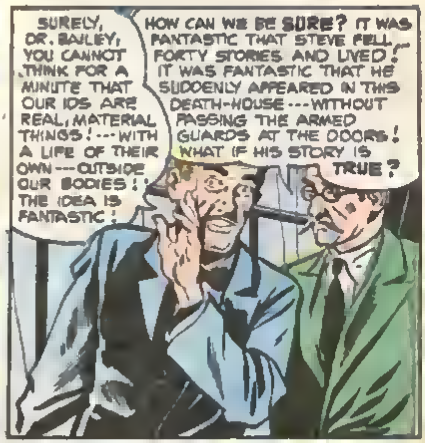


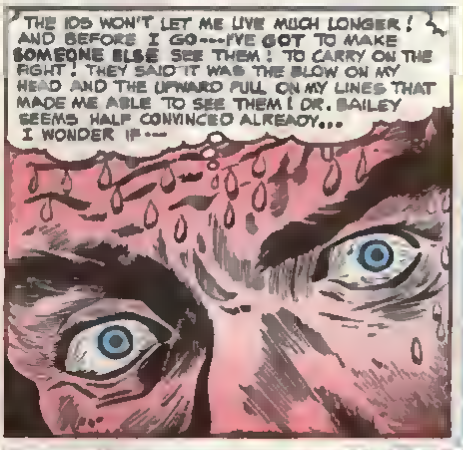



CATCH HIM! HE MUST NOT REACH THE STAGE!
TRAMPLE HIM!
IT'S TOO LATE! HE MADE IT! HE'S ON EARTH! MIGHT AS WELL LET HIM LIVE NOW--- FOR A LITTLE LONGER! WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

AT THE VERY INSTANT THAT STEVE ENTERED THE BLINDING CIRCLE OF LIGHT, IT DISAPPEARED ---AND HE FOUND HIMSELF ON EARTH!
STOP! DON'T PULL THAT SWITCH! THAT MAN IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HE DID! NONE OF US ARE! THE IDS MADE HIM DO IT!

HOW DID THAT MAN GET IN HERE? HE IS MAD! GUARDS, GET HIM OUT OF HERE AT ONCE! THROW HIM IN AN EMPTY CELL---ANYWHERE! UNTIL THIS IS OVER!
SLUMPED IN A CELL IN DEATH-ROW STEVE DRUMMOND SAW THE MACABRE FLICKERING OF THE LIGHTS THAT MEANT ANOTHER MAN-PUPPET HAD GONE TO HIS DEATH! AND HE KNEW THAT--- SOMEWHERE ---THE IDS WERE WATCHING AND LAUGHING!





AND NOW THAT YOU KNOW THE TRUTH---CAN YOU SEE THE IDS?

WILL YOU HELP DESTROY THEM SO THAT MAN CAN BE FREE?

OR... DO YOU DARE?

THE LEGEND of GLAMIS CASTLE

TOURISTS WHO VISIT SCOTLAND ARE ANXIOUS TO SEE ALL THE OLD FEUDAL FORTRESSES, BUT THERE IS ONE PLACE THEY STEER CLEAR OF AND THAT IS THE GLAMIS CASTLE IN FORFARSHIRE! THIS IS NOT STRANGE FOR THE MACABRE STORY IDENTIFIED WITH THIS BARONIAL STRONGHOLD IS SPINE CHILLING ENOUGH TO MAKE EVEN THE LOCAL GUIDES GIVE IT A WIDE BERTH!

IT ALL BEGAN IN THE YEAR 1034, WHEN MALCOLM II WAS SURPRISED IN HIS BEDROOM ONE NIGHT BY A FANATICAL FOLLOWER OF KENNETH, WHO WAS DESTINED TO SUCCEED HIM AS RULER!

I AM MACLAREN AND I HAVE COME TO KILL YOU, MALCOLM! YOU WILL DIE AT THE POINT OF MY KNIFE!

BEGONE! I WILL CALL THE GUARD! YOU ARE SURE TO BE CAUGHT AND KILLED!

I WILL BE KILLED BUT ONCE! BUT YOU, TYRANT, FOR THE WRONGS YOU HAVE DONE MY PEOPLE, WILL SUFFER MANY DEATHS BEFORE I MAKE THE FINAL THRUST!

MALCOLM'S SCREAMS BROUGHT THE GUARDS, BUT BEFORE HE COULD BE STOPPED, MACLAREN'S EVIL KNIFE DEALT ITS FINAL BLOW!

FOR THIS EVIL MISDEED, MACLAREN, I CURSE YOU! TO PAY FOR THIS CRIME YOU SHALL BE HANGED AS A MURDERER ONCE A YEAR FOR A THOUSAND YEARS!

OLD FOOL, I AM READY TO DIE FOR MY CAUSE! TELL YOUR MEN TO HANG ME FORTHWITH AND HAVE DONE WITH IT!

AS MALCOLM'S LIFE EBBED OUT ON THE STONE FLOOR, MACLAREN WAS DRAGGED OFF TO A DUNGEON IN THE CASTLE TO AWAIT HIS EXECUTION! WHEN THE GALLOWS WERE CONSTRUCTED HE WAS LED TO THE NOOSE AND EXACTLY AT MIDNIGHT...

HIS NECK IS BROKEN! THE MURDER HAS BEEN REPAID!

EEEYAAH!

BUT THE FULL PAYMENT HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE...

MY NECK WAS BROKEN BUT... BUT I AM NOT DEAD!

NO, MACLAREN, NOT YET! MALCOLM DECREED THAT YOU WOULD DIE A THOUSAND DEATHS! THIS IS JUST YOUR FIRST!

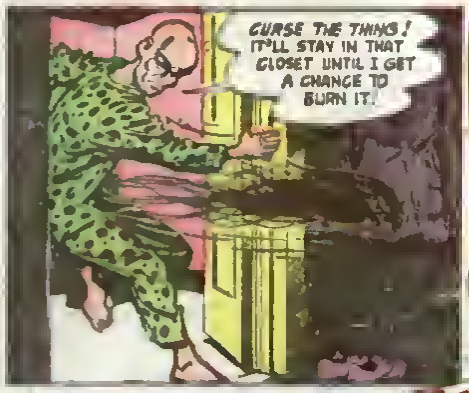
SO TODAY, MORE THAN NINE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE DEATH SENTENCE PRONOUNCED BY MALCOLM II IS STILL BEING CARRIED OUT! FOR ONCE A YEAR, AT MIDNIGHT, STRANGE SOUNDS COME FROM THE GLAMIS CASTLE! THERE IS THE SOUND OF A TRAP DOOR LET DOWN!, A SUDDEN SCREAM AND THEN A SHARP CRACKING! YOU PEOPLE WHO VISIT THE ANCIENT CASTLE HAVE PATIENCE, THE SENTENCE HAS ONLY EIGHTY-TWO MORE YEARS TO GO!

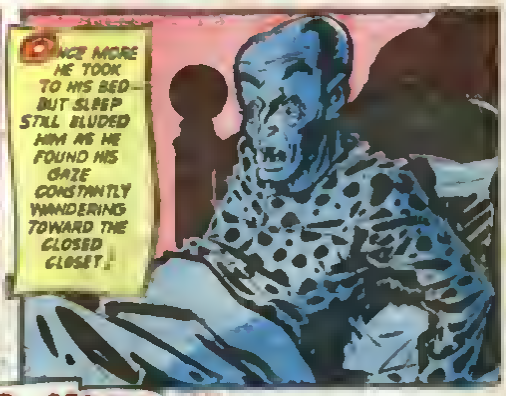
IF THIS TALE DOESN'T CURL YOUR HAIR, IT WILL LEAVE IT WHITE WITH FEAR!
The WIG!
IT WAS ONLY A SMALL BARBER SHOP AND IN SPITE OF LOUIE'S DISPOSITION, IT HAD ITS LOYAL PATRONS! MAYBE IT WAS BECAUSE LOUIE WAS SUCH A PERFECT BUTT FOR THEIR JOKES...
HIDE THAT DOME, LOUIE! I HAVEN'T MY SUN-GLASSES WITH ME!
IF A FLY EVER LANDED ON HIS BEAN, IT'D SKID AND BREAK ITS NECK! HA, HA!
OKAY, WISE GUYS!
WITH THAT SOUR DISPOSITION OF YOURS, LOUIE, EVEN THE WEREWOLF ON THE PROWL AROUND HERE WOULDN'T WANT ANY PART OF YOU! I'LL BET YOU'VE GOT VINEGAR IN YOUR VEINS!
DON'T TRY TO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME WITH THAT WEREWOLF TALK!
NO--THIS TIME WE'RE LEVELLING, LOUIE! THEY FOUND THAT PALMER'S BODY WITH HIS THROAT TORN! THE TEETH MARKS OF A WEREWOLF! THE POLICE ARE CONVINCED HE'S IN THIS VICINITY!
WHAT DO I CARE IF HE'S AROUND HERE? GET OUT!
A SALO BARBER! NO WONDER I'M RIDICULED AND LAUGHED AT! WHY OID IT HAVE TO HAPPEN TO ME?
ENGROSSED IN HIS BITTER REVERIE, LOUIE SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF STARING AT THE REFLECTION OF A TALL, GAUNT FIGURE!
HUH--? WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?
I'D LIKE A HAIRCUT, PLEASE! RIGHT AWAY!
STRANGER IN THESE PARTS, AREN'T YOU? I'D SAY IT'S A LONG TIME SINCE YOU SAW A BARBER!
JUST PASSING THROUGH! IT HAPPENS THAT MY HAIR GROWS VERY FAST! CUT IT SHORT!
SNIP SNIP

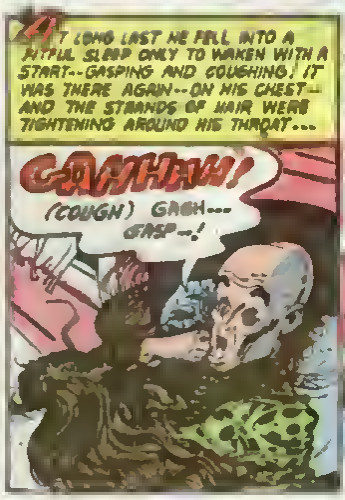
THERE YOU ARE! I OUGHT TO CHARGE YOU MORE FOR CUTTING ALL THAT HAIR! BUT IF---!
I DON'T MIND PAYING EXTRA! YOU DID A GOOD JOB!
THE MAN'S THIN LIPS HAD PARTED IN A SLIGHT SMILE AND LOUIE CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING THAT SENT A CHILL DOWN HIS BACK!
THOSE POINTED TEETH--! LIKE FANGS! COULD-- COULD HE BE THE WEREWOLF?
THAT WILD THOUGHT KEPT PLAGUING HIM FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, BUT HE HAD ABOUT DISMISSED IT FROM HIS MIND WHEN HE OPENED HIS SHOP NEXT MORNING ONLY TO LOOK UP AND SEE...
YOU---?! AGAIN!!?
EVIDENTLY YOU DIDN'T TRIM MY HAIR SHORT ENOUGH! I TOLD YOU IT GREW VERY FAST! I'LL NEED ANOTHER HAIRCUT!
LOUIE KEPT STARING AT HIM--AND IT DAWNED ON HIM THAT ONLY SOMETHING UNNATURAL COULD GROW HAIR THAT FAST! AND THOSE HAIRCUTS--IT WAS TO GIVE HIM THE APPEARANCE OF AN AVERAGE MAN...
YES--THAT'S IT! THEY'RE HUNTING FOR HIM AND WITH LONG HAIR, HE MIGHT DRAW SUSPICION! HE IS THE WEREWOLF!
MAKE IT FAST, BARBER! I'M IN A HURRY!
IF I COULD KILL HIM--I-- I'D BE A HERO! THEY WOULDN'T LAUGH AT ME ANY MORE! I COULD SHOW THEM ALL!
WHAT'S TAKING YOU SO LONG?
WEREW... DISCOU...
AND BEFORE HE COULD CHANGE HIS MIND, LOUIE LUNGED AT THE FIGURE WITH THE SHARP, GLEAMING SHEARS...
I DID IT! I DID IT! HE'S DEAD!
WEREWOLF RUMOR DISCOUNTED BY POLICE

WHAT TO DO WITH THE BODY? SHOULD HE TELL THE TOWNFOLK NOW? BUT LOUIE WAS ALREADY RELISHING HIS MENTAL ROLE OF A HERO! HE'D WAIT --AND THEN SPRING THE SURPRISE IN HIS OWN GOOD TIME!
I'LL BURY THE BODY IN THE CELLAR!
LOUIE WORKED FEVERISHLY AND THE HOLLOW SOUND OF THE PICK AND SHOVEL RESOUNDED THROUGHOUT THE CELLAR AS HE DUG THE HOLE SIX FEET LONG -- THREE FEET WIDE! AND THEN AS HE WAS ABOUT TO ROLL IT INTO THE MAKESHIFT GRAVE...
THAT HAIR--! IT'S A SHAME TO WASTE IT!
HA-HA-HA!
IT'LL MAKE A NICE WIG!
A FEW DAYS LATER...
LOUIE! WHAT THE DEVIL HAVE YOU GOT ON YOUR HEAD?
WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? IT'S A WIG! A BARBER OUGHT TO HAVE SOME SORT OF HAIR ON HIS HEAD!
HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT? AND IT ALMOST LOOKS REAL!
DON'T TAKE IT OFF, LOUIE! MAYBE IT'LL TAKE ROOT IF YOU WATER IT ENOUGH!
HOW LOUIE GLOATED THAT DAY! HE EVEN MANAGED A SMILE AT THE REMARKS THAT WERE MADE ABOUT HIS WIG! AND THAT NIGHT AS HE PREPARED FOR BED...
NOW YOU STAY THERE UNTIL MORNING! WAIT'LL THOSE SMART ALECS FIND OUT I KILLED THE WEREWOLF!

THE WISPY HAIRS FROM THE WIG REACHED FURTHER AND FURTHER TOWARD LOUIE AND PERHAPS IT WAS WHEN THEY TOUCHED HIS THROAT THAT HIS EYES POPPED OPEN!
AIEEE!
THE WINDOW'S OPEN! THE WIND MUST HAVE BLOWN THE CURTAIN ON ME AND I DREAMED IT WAS THE WIG! YES, THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED! I MUSTN'T LET MY IMAGINATION RUN AWAY WITH ME!
BUT THE FOLLOWING MORNING AS HE FITTED THE WIG ON HIS HEAD...
THE HAIR ON THE WIG--! IT'S GROWN!
NO -- IT CAN'T BE! IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!
MAYBE I JUST DIDN'T NOTICE HOW LONG THE HAIR WAS BEFORE-- BUT THIS'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!
SNIP SNI
RELUCTANTLY, HE WORE IT AGAIN, BUT SOMEHOW HE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO DRIFT OFF TO SLEEP THAT NIGHT! HE FOUND HIMSELF APPREHENSIVELY EYEING THE WIG, WHEN SUDDENLY THE HAIR SEEMED TO REACH OUT TOWARD HIM--REACH FOR HIS THROAT!
AGHHH--! NO! NO!
THE HAIR--! IT'S GROWN AGAIN!

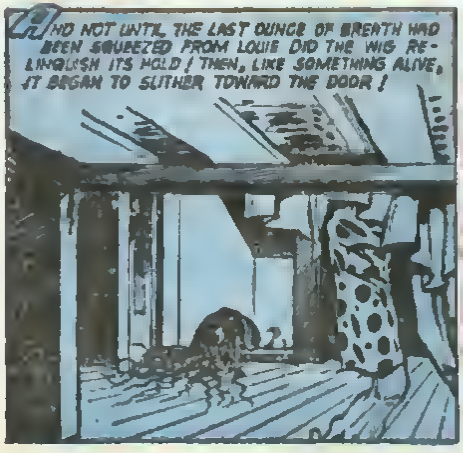

CURSE THE THING! IT'LL STAY IN THAT CLOSET UNTIL I GET A CHANCE TO BURN IT!


ONCE MORE HE TOOK TO HIS BED— BUT SLEEP STILL ELUDED HIM AS HE FOUND HIS GAZE CONSTANTLY WANDERING TOWARD THE CLOSED CLOSET.


AT LONG LAST HE FELL INTO A RESTFUL SLEEP ONLY TO WAKEN WITH A START--GASPING AND COUGHING! IT WAS THERE AGAIN--ON HIS CHEST— AND THE STRANDS OF HAIR WERE TIGHTENING AROUND HIS THROAT...
GAWHHW!
(COUGH) GRGH--- GASP--!

NO--NO! HELP! GAWHHHHHHH...

NO MATTER HOW HARD HE TUGGED AT THE STRANDS OF HAIR--THEY ONLY TIGHTENED AROUND HIS THROAT--TIGHTENED--AND TIGHTENED--AND THEN...


AND NOT UNTIL THE LAST OUNCE OF BREATH HAD BEEN SQUEEZED FROM LOUIE DID THE WIG RELINQUISH ITS HOLD! THEN, LIKE SOMETHING ALIVE, IT BEGAN TO SLITHER TOWARD THE DOOR!

IF YOU'VE FOLLOWED THE WIG— FOLLOWED IT TO THE CELLAR--YOU, TOO, WOULD SEE IT COME TO REST ON A HORRIBLE SPECTRE THAT ROSE OUT OF A CRUDE GRAVE--A SPECTRE THAT EMERGED IN THE FORM OF A WEREWOLF!

THE DEVIL'S SOUL

ON THE 17TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 1642, JEREMIA STONE, A CORPORAL OF A COMPANY OF DRAGOONS, THOUGH WOUNDED, SURVIVED THE BATTLE AT KEYNTON AND MADE HIS WAY TO ANCHOR INN AT WARWICK.

I WILL REQUIRE A ROOM, MADAM, UNTIL MY WOUNDS ARE HEALED! I'LL TROUBLE YOU TO GUARD MY BAG OF MONEY UNTIL I HAVE REGAINED MY HEALTH!

ENTER, SIR! WE SHALL MAKE THE ANCHOR INN YOUR HOME!

THIS IS INDEED GOOD FORTUNE, MY WIFE! YOU SEE TO HIS NEEDS FOR A ROOM AND I'LL SEE TO IT THAT HE NEVER SEES HIS BAG OF MONEY AGAIN!

YOU ARE INDEED CLEVER, MY HUSBAND! WHEN THE SOLDIER IS FAST ASLEEP WE SHALL FIGURE OUT A SCHEME!

WITHIN A FORTNIGHT, CORPORAL STONE WAS READY TO LEAVE BUT WHEN HE ASKED FOR HIS MONEY THE INN-KEEPERS DENIED THAT THEY HAD EVER RECEIVED ANY MONEY FROM HIM.

BUT I TELL YOU, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT! YOU GAVE US NO MONEY WHEN YOU CAME HERE!

BY MY SWORD, SIR, I'LL HAVE MY BAG OF MONEY OR I'LL HAVE YOUR LIFE!

HELP! HELP! ROBBER! CUTTHROAT!

THE LOCAL POLICE SOON ARRIVED AND DESPITE THE SOLDIER'S PROTESTATIONS, HE WAS HAULED OFF TO THE LOCAL JAIL WHERE THINGS INDEED LOOKED GLOOMY FOR HIM. BUT THEN, THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS TRIAL, HE HAD A VISITOR---

THERE IS NO DOUBT OF THE FUTURE, JEREMIA STONE: THE COURT WILL FIND YOU GUILTY OF ATTEMPTED ROBBERY! BUT I WILL GET YOU FREE IF YOU GIVE YOUR SOUL TO ME!

NO, NEVER! I WOULD RATHER GIVE UP MY LIFE!

FOOLISH MORTAL! BUT I WILL NOT BE CHEATED OF A SOUL! I WILL DEFEND YOU WITHOUT REWARD! WHEN THE COURT INSTRUCTS YOU TO SELECT AN ATTORNEY, CHOOSE ME! I WILL BE IN DISGUISE IN A RED CAP AND A FEATHER!

THE SOLDIER DID AS THE DEVIL INSTRUCTED AND THE NEXT DAY IN COURT FOUND THE TALL STRANGER IN A RED CAP AND A FEATHER VEHEMENTLY DEFENDING THE SOLDIER IN THE DOCK.

I TELL YOU, THIS SOLDIER IS INNOCENT! WITH THE COURT'S PERMISSION I WOULD SEARCH THE INN AND I AM SURE I WOULD FIND THE BAG OF MONEY THERE!

THAT IS A LIE! I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE MONEY; I SWEAR IT! MAY THE DEVIL FETCH ME AWAY NOW, BODY AND SOUL, BEFORE YOU ALL IF I SWEAR FALSELY!

AND THAT WAS JUST WHAT THE DEVIL WAS WAITING FOR, FOR HE DISCARDED HIS DISGUISE AND---

HA! HA! HA! I WILL HAVE MY SOUL AFTER ALL!

AYEEEE!

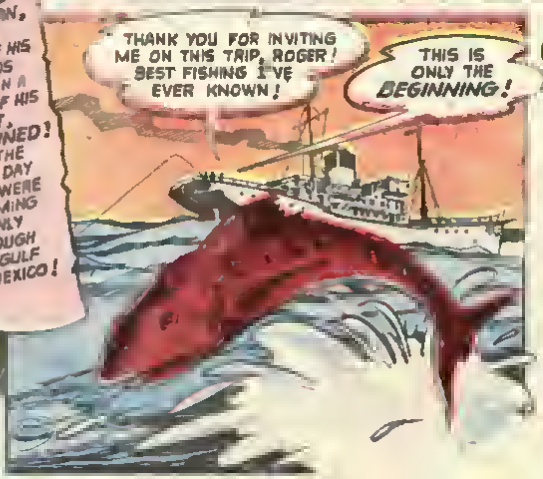
I CONFESS! WE HAVE BEEN WICKED! I WILL RETURN THE MONEY TO THE SOLDIER!

THIS STORY WAS FOUND IN OLD OFFICIAL ENGLISH RECORDS. THE TRUTH OF THE STORY WAS ATTESTED TO BY JOHN FINCH, A SHOEMAKER, IN SAINT MARTINS, WHO WAS AN EYEWITNESS.

ROGER LENS DIDN'T BELIEVE THE STORIES ABOUT AN ENCHANTED MARLIN. HE HAD TO DISCOVER FOR HIMSELF WHY THEY CALLED IT THE . . .

DEATH FISH

ROGER LENS, THE NOTED SPORTSMAN, INVITED THREE OF HIS FRIENDS ALONG ON A CRUISE OF HIS YACHT, RENOWNED! ON THE THIRD DAY THEY WERE STEAMING SLOWLY THROUGH THE GULF OF MEXICO!



ROGER LENS DIDN'T ANSWER, BUT A SECRETIVE SMILE PLAYED ON HIS LIPS! LATER, AS ROGER AND HIS FRIENDS GATHERED IN HIS TROPHY ROOM...

I INVITED YOU THREE ON THIS TRIP FOR A SPECIAL REASON! YOU'RE THE MOST ARDENT BIG GAME FISHERMEN I KNOW!

YOU'RE NOT SO UNENTHUSIASTIC YOURSELF, ROGER!

YOURS IS THE LARGEST AND FINEST COLLECTION OF TROPHIES I EVER SAW! EVERY KIND OF GAME FISH...

...MUSKELLUNGE AND BIG TUNA...

... SWORDFISH AND STURGEON...

...THE WHITE SHARK, STICKLEBACK, AND GIANT RAY!

YOU'VE CAUGHT THEM ALL, ROGER! FREDDY AND DANIEL CAN'T BEGIN TO MATCH YOUR RECORD. AND NEITHER CAN I!

BUT THERE'S ONE FISH I *HAVEN'T* CAUGHT, MARTHA!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT, ROGER! THERE IS NO SPECIES OF GAME FISH YOU HAVEN'T

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, MARTHA! I MEAN *ONE FISH*---*ONE* IN PARTICULAR! SEA CAPTAINS CALL IT *THE ENCHANTED MARLIN!*

YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS, ROGER? WHY, THE ENCHANTED MARLIN IS ONLY A MYTH!
ACCORDING TO THE STORIES, IT'S A FISH NEARLY FIFTY FEET LONG WHICH DESTROYS ALL FISHERMEN WHO GO AFTER IT!
SEA CAPTAINS ARE NOTORIOUSLY SUPERSTITIOUS, ADGEA! THAT'S WHY THEY CLAIM THE MARLIN IS "ENCHANTED"--- A SUPER-NATURAL BEING! BUT YOU'RE A CIVILIZED MAN! YOU CAN'T BELIEVE...
I BELIEVE THE MARLIN EXISTS, FREDDY!
AND I KNOW AS WELL AS YOU DO THAT THERE IS NOTHING SUPERNATURAL ABOUT THIS MARLIN! BUT THERE ARE TOO MANY EYEWITNESSES TO ITS INCREDIBLE SIZE TO DOUBT THE TRUTH OF THE REPORTS!
THAT'S WHY I'VE ORDERED THE CAPTAIN TO PUT OUT INTO DEEP WATERS WHERE THE MARLIN HAS BEEN SIGHTED! I PROPOSE A TOAST, MY FRIENDS! TO THE MOST EXCITING HUNT IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SPORT--- THE CHASE OF THE "ENCHANTED" MARLIN!
FOR MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS ROGER'S YACHT SEARCHED THE WATERS WHERE THE FABLED MARLIN WAS REPUTED TO BE FOUND! AND THEN, ONE AFTERNOON, ROGER'S LINE MADE A STRIKE!
THAT'S IT!
AS THE HOOKED MARLIN LEAPED HALF-WAY OUT OF THE WATER, ROGER AND HIS FRIENDS GASPED IN ASTONISHMENT!
WHAT A MONSTER!
IT'S BIGGER THAN IT WAS CLAIMED TO BE!
AS THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MIGHTY GAME FISH WENT ON, THE SKIES DARKENED OMINOUSLY! THUNDER ROLLED...
A BAD SQUALL COMING UP! CURIOUS--- THE WEATHER REPORTS MENTIONED NOTHING ABOUT A STORM!

I-I'M FRIGHTENED, FREDDY! THIS SUDDEN STORM! AS THOUGH NATURE ITSELF WERE WARNING US TO LEAVE THE ENCHANTED MARLIN ALONE!
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A FOOL, MARTHA! GO TO YOUR CABIN---AND GET SOME SLEEP!
THE SKIES OPENED IN TORRENTIAL RAIN, AND IN THE HEAVY RUNNING SEAS THE STURDY LINE SNAPPED! THE MARLIN BROKE FREE!
SNAP
I LOST HIM, DANIEL! NOT EVEN THE STRONGEST LINE COULD HOLD HIM FOR LONG! NEXT TIME I'LL USE THE SHIP'S HARPOON!
IF THERE IS A NEXT TIME!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I DON'T LIKE IT! NOT A BIT! A MARLIN THAT SIZE ISN'T NATURAL! I WISH YOU'D ORDER THE CAPTAIN TO PUT BACK INTO PORT
NOT ME, DANIEL! I'M GOING TO KEEP ON HUNTING THAT FISH! NOW THAT I KNOW HE REALLY EXISTS, I WON'T STOP UNTIL HE'S A MOUNTED TROPHY OF MY GREATEST VICTORY!
ROGER LENS DIDN'T HAVE LONG TO WAIT FOR HIS NEXT ENCOUNTER WITH THE MARLIN! LATE THAT NIGHT...
WHAT'S THAT?
SOMETHING BANGED INTO US BELOW THE WATER LINE!
THUD
MOMENTS LATER, IN ROGER LENS' STATEROOM!
NOW I SEE IT!... GOOD HEAVENS! THE GIANT MARLIN! IT ATTACKED THE SHIP!
WE'RE STOVE IN, MR. LENS! SHIPPING WATER FASTER THAN THE PUMPS CAN HANDLE IT! GET UP ON DECK---FAST!

SUDDENLY THE YACHT HEAVED VIOLENTLY, TURNED TURTLE, ENDING ALL HOPE OF RESCUE FOR THE TRAPPED HUMANS WITHIN!

EAHHHH!

RENOWNED

DOWN IT SANK INTO THE DEPTHS, RETURNING ROGER'S FISH TROPHIES TO THEIR NATURAL ELEMENT!

ROGER LENS WOKE IN A DANK DARKNESS, CHOKING WITH NAUSEA! THERE WAS A DULL THROBBING IN HIS BRAIN...

WH-WHERE AM I? WHY WASN'T I DROWNED?

THAT CURSED MARLIN! IT SANK MY YACHT, DROWNED MY FRIENDS! B-BUT IN SOME WAY I DON'T UNDERSTAND, I REACHED SAFETY! THIS CAVERN MUST BE SEALED OFF, UNDERWATER!

ROGER CRAWLED THROUGH AN ARCHWAY INTO THE MAIN CAVERN BEYOND! THEN THE REASON FOR HIS MOMENTARY SURVIVAL BECAME EVIDENT...

...AS HE SAW THE MOUNTED BODIES OF HIS FRIENDS, FREDDY AND MARTHA AND DANIEL! AND BEYOND THEM, OTHER BODIES STRETCHING AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD REACH! IT WAS A MONSTROUS HUMAN TROPHY ROOM!

EEEEYAH! THE MARLIN--- IT HUNTS HUMANS!

THEN AS THE WATER ROSE ABOVE HIS HEAD, ROGER SAW THE MARLIN SWIMMING TOWARD HIM! AND THAT WAS THE LAST THING ROGER LENS EVER SAW!

NEXT TIME YOU GO FISHING, MAKE SURE YOUR LINE IS STRONG ENOUGH--- OR ELSE...HEH, HEH!

THE GATES OF HELL YAWNED WIDE FOR TYLER SPENCE, AND AS HE GAZED INTO THAT FEARFUL ABYSS HIS MIND CRUMBLED AT THE HORROR BEFORE HIM...FOR HE WAS TRAPPED BY THE SATANIC VENGEANCE OF THE...

GAUNT GRAY CAT

ON THE MUSTY PARLOR OF THE SPENCE MANSION, TYLER SPENCE WATCHED HIS GAUNT, SHRIVELED AUNT TABITHA AT HER KNITTING. SOMETHING ABOUT THAT SCENE HAD ALWAYS MADE HIM RESTLESS, UNEASY---

THE BLASTED CATS! THEY'RE ALWAYS AROUND HER. I CAN'T STAND THE SLINKING CREATURES. UGH---HOW THEY RUB UP AGAINST ME!

GET AWAY FROM ME, YOU DISGUSTING LITTLE BEAST!

TYLER!

YYYYOOOOWWRRR

INSTANTLY, AN EERIE TRANSFORMATION SWEPT OVER THE OLD CRONE. HER BACK ARCHED IN A STRANGELY FELINE CROUCH. HER VOICE SCREECHED IN AN ANGRY HISS:

HOW DARE YOU! HOW DARE YOU KICK MY CATS, YOU YOUNG WHELP?!

SHE SNARLS AT ME LIKE ONE OF THOSE CURSED PETS OF HERS!

EVEN WHEN AUNT TABITHA'S RAGE SUBSIDED, HER VOICE CONTINUED TO HAVE A PURRING, FELINE QUALITY.
REALLY, TYLER--YOUR HATRED OF CATS IS ALMOST UNNATURAL. WHY, WHEN THEY WERE ALIVE, EVERY OTHER MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY LOVED THE DEAR CREATURES!
I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHY I NAMED MY LITTLE PETS AFTER THEM. WITH MY CATS ABOUT ME, IT'S AS THOUGH OUR FAMILY WERE STILL ALIVE!
SHE THINKS OF THOSE BEASTS AS IF THEY REALLY WERE OUR FAMILY. THE ONLY REASON I CAME HERE IS THE MONEY I'LL GET WHEN SHE DIES! I'M HER LAST SURVIVING HEIR!
EVEN AS THE THOUGHT CAME TO HIM SHE LIFTED HER HEAD IN A SLOW, SECRET SMILE... WITH A STRANGE TELEPATHIC SENSE SHE SEEMED TO READ HIS MIND.
AH! YES, MY DEAR NEPHEW! ALL MY WEALTH WILL BE YOURS IN TIME. BUT YOU MUST BE PATIENT.
STILL, IT WON'T BE LONG, CONSIDERING MY HEART CONDITION!
THAT'S JUST WHAT I HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING, MY DEAR AUNT.
WITH FIENDISH GLOATING, TYLER RECALLED THE TWO WHITE TABLETS HE'D DROPPED INTO THE VIAL OF PILLS --THE PILLS AUNT TABITHA TOOK IN THE EVENT OF A HEART ATTACK.
THESE TWO PILLS I'M MIXING WITH HER HEART ATTACK PRESCRIPTION ARE MADE OF SUGAR. SOMETIME, IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE WHEN SHE HAS HER NEXT SEIZURE, SHE MAY TAKE ONE....
BY THE TIME SHE REALIZES THE PILLS AREN'T HELPING HER ---SHE'LL BE BEYOND HELP!

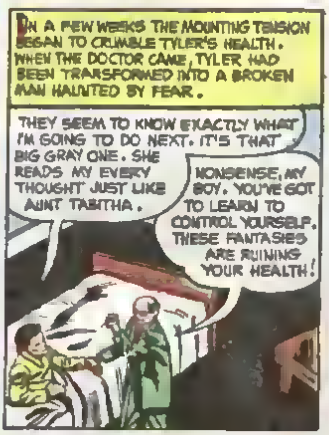
IT WAS THE VERY NEXT DAY THAT TYLER SPENCE'S PLAN CAME TO ITS MACABRE FRUITION.
MY CAT! YOU STEPPED ON ITS TAIL DELIBERATELY! I SAW YOU! I---OHHH!
MEEERROWW
OH, MY HEART! MY HEART! QUICK--MY PILLS!
OF COURSE! I'LL GET THEM AT ONCE, AUNT TABITHA!
BUT THE PILLS DIDN'T HELP, AND AGONIZED MOMENTS LATER THE OLD WOMAN WAS BREATHING HER LAST.
...CAN'T UNDERSTAND... PILLS ALWAYS HELPED BEFORE...
IT'S EASILY EXPLAINED, MY DEAR AUNT. I THINK I MANAGED THE WHOLE THING RATHER CLEVERLY.
MURDERER! MURDERER! YOU'LL HANG FOR THIS!
NONSENSE. THEY'LL NEVER FIND OUT HOW IT HAPPENED. EVEN AN AUTOPSY WOULD ONLY SHOW A TINY TRACE OF SUGAR. BESIDES, THEY'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU TO DIE.
YOU WILL PAY... DEARLY...DEARLY ...AAAGGGG!
POOR AUNT TABITHA! BUT AT LEAST HER SUFFERING IS OVER.
NOW IT'S ALL MINE! ALL HER WEALTH, NOW I CAN SELL THIS OLD MORGUE OF A HOUSE AND GET RID OF ALL THESE BLASTED CATS!
YOWRRR! MEEYOWR!
BUT TYLER WAS TO FIND HIS AUNT HAD MADE HIM THE BUTT OF A GRUESOME JEST. FOR A FEW DAYS LATER, THE WILL WAS READ...
"...AND TO MY BELOVED NEPHEW I LEAVE ALL MY WORLDLY GOODS--PROVIDED HE LIVES IN MY HOUSE AND CARES DUTIFULLY FOR THE FELINE FRIENDS THAT WERE AS DEAR TO ME AS MY OWN FLESH AND BLOOD!"

BUT EVEN IN THE MIDST OF HIS RAGE, TYLER SENSED A DARK AND NAMELESS DREAD WITHIN HIS BONES. HE TURNED AND SAW A WEIRD COTERIE WATCHING HIM IN SILENT LAUGHTER.
LOOK AT THEM LICKING THEIR CHOPS AND GRINNING AT ME. I TELL YOU, GORM, THE SLINKING CATS KNOW WHAT YOU'VE READ IN THE WILL.
CALM YOURSELF, MY BOY! YOUR NERVES ARE ALL UNSTRUNG.
IT WAS A MOMENT AFTER THE LAWYER HAD LEFT, THAT A GAUNT GRAY SHADOW STALKED INTO THE ROOM.
THAT BIG GRAY CAT, WHERE DID IT COME FROM? IT'S NOT ONE OF AUNT TABITHA'S. IT MUST BE SOME STRAY! I'LL GET RID OF IT.
THE OTHER CATS, THEY'RE ATTACKING ME! HELP! HELP!
MMERRROOW!
WITH RAGING, SQUAWLING FURY THEY TORE AT HIM--- AT HIS CLOTHES, HIS HAIR, HIS EYES. TYLER'S SCREAMS OF TERROR BROUGHT LAWYER GORM RUNNING BACK INTO THE HOUSE.
MR. GORM! THANK HEAVENS YOU'VE COME! GET THESE DEMONS AWAY FROM ME!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHY ARE YOU ABUSING THESE CATS WHEN YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE CARING FOR THEM?
PHHT
MEOOOOWRR
ROWR
IT'S THAT GRAY CAT! IT DOESN'T BELONG HERE. AUNT TABITHA NEVER HAD MORE THAN SIX CATS.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT! THE WILL DOESN'T SPECIFY THE NUMBER OF CATS SHE HAD.
AS EXECUTOR OF THE WILL I ADVISE YOU TO CARE FOR ALL THE CATS IN THIS HOUSE OR YOU MAY HAVE TO FORFEIT YOUR INHERITANCE!
NO! OH! NO!
SICKENED, HIS NERVES SHATTERED, TYLER USHERED GORM OUT OF THE DOOR. BUT ON HIS RETURN TO THE ROOM HE WAS GREETED BY A SIGHT THAT SET HIM SHUDDERING WITH INWARD HORROR.
THE GRAY CAT! IT'S SITTING IN AUNT TABITHA'S FAVORITE CHAIR....AND THE OTHERS ARE SITTING AT ITS FEET, JUST AS THEY DID FOR AUNT TABITHA!

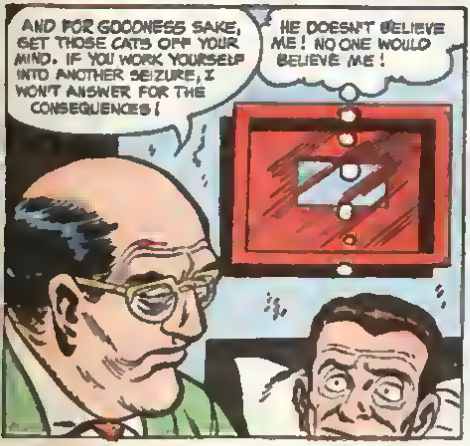
THAT EXPRESSION ON ITS FACE! THAT BIT OF RIBBON AT HER THROAT! IT---IT'S A-AUNT T-TABITHA!

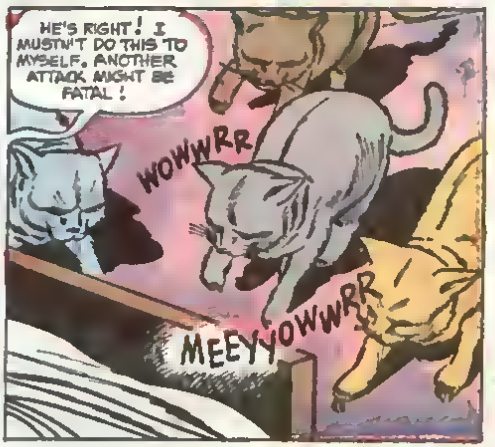
IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, THE HOUSE BECAME A PLACE OF UNSPEAKABLE HORROR FOR TYLER SPENCE. THE VAST, DUSTY ROOMS WERE PEOPLED BY FURTIVE SCUTTLING SHAPES.

IT MUST BE AUNT TABITHA. SHE'S TRYING DELIBERATELY TO HARASS ME, TORMENT ME, BREAK ME DOWN!


IN A FEW WEEKS THE MOUNTING TENSION BEGAN TO CRUMBLE TYLER'S HEALTH. WHEN THE DOCTOR CAME, TYLER HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A BROKEN MAN HAUNTED BY FEAR.
THEY SEEM TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M GOING TO DO NEXT. IT'S THAT BIG GRAY ONE. SHE READS MY EVERY THOUGHT JUST LIKE AUNT TABITHA.
NONSENSE, MY BOY. YOU'VE GOT TO LEARN TO CONTROL YOURSELF. THESE FANTASIES ARE RUINING YOUR HEALTH!

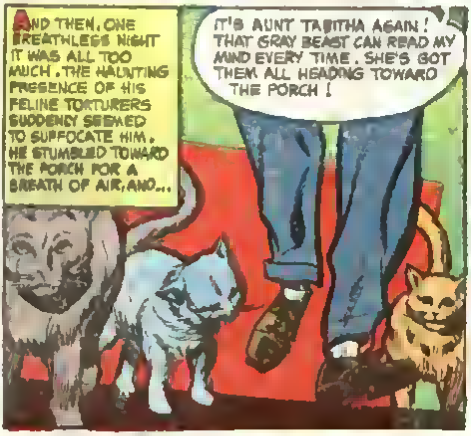
AS FOR YOUR HEART. IT SEEMS TO BE THE SAME CONDITION YOUR DEAR DEPARTED AUNT HAD. I'LL HAVE THE DRUGGIST SEND OVER THE SAME PILLS!


AND FOR GOODNESS SAKE, GET THOSE CATS OFF YOUR MIND. IF YOU WORK YOURSELF INTO ANOTHER SEIZURE, I WON'T ANSWER FOR THE CONSEQUENCES!
HE DOESN'T BELIEVE ME! NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE ME!


HE'S RIGHT! I MUSTN'T DO THIS TO MYSELF. ANOTHER ATTACK MIGHT BE FATAL!
WOWWRR
MEEYYOWWRR

YES, YOU OLD GRAY DEVIL! THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, ISN'T IT? BUT YOU WON'T HAVE YOUR WAY. AND I WON'T LET YOU DRIVE ME AWAY FROM MY INHERITANCE!
PURRRRR!

IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED TYLER'S DETERMINATION BEGAN TO BREAK, AND WITH EACH PASSING DAY THE CATS SEEMED MORE AWARE OF HIS GROWING HYSTERIA.


AND THEN, ONE BREATHLESS NIGHT IT WAS ALL TOO MUCH. THE HAUNTING PRESENCE OF HIS FELINE TORTURERS SUDDENLY SEEMED TO SUFFOCATE HIM. HE STUMBLED TOWARD THE PORCH FOR A BREATH OF AIR, AND...
IT'S AUNT TABITHA AGAIN! THAT GRAY BEAST CAN READ MY MIND EVERY TIME. SHE'S GOT THEM ALL HEADING TOWARD THE PORCH!

ABRUPTLY HE WAS SEIZED BY A MAD, DESIRE TO GET AWAY---GET AWAY FROM THOSE CATS AT ANY COST BEFORE HIS BRAIN COLLAPSED!
I CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER. I'LL TRICK THEM, I'LL MAKE A RUN FOR MY ROOM!

I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT BEFORE THEY GET THERE!

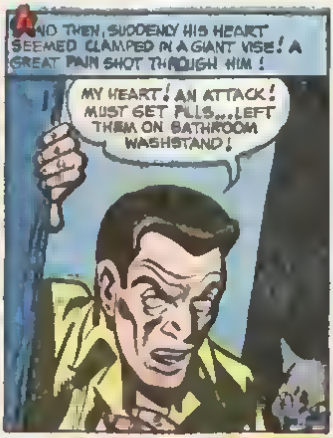
THANK HEAVENS! AT LAST I'LL GET ONE NIGHT OF SLEEP WITHOUT THOSE BLASTED CATS TO HAUNT ME!

GO AHEAD! SCRATCH! CLAW AT THE DOOR! I'VE BEATEN YOU! BEATEN YOU AT LEAST THIS TIME!

BUT ALL THAT NIGHT, TYLER WAS TORMENTED BY ENDLESS DREAMS AS SATANIC SHAPES HOUNDED HIM THROUGH THE DARK CORRIDORS OF HIS BRAIN.
NO, NO! GET AWAY! GET AWAY!

IT WAS TOWARD MIDNIGHT THAT TYLER AWOKE TO FEEL A GREAT WEIGHT UPON HIS CHEST --- SMOTHERING HIM, STRANGLING HIM! THE CAT LEAPT OFF HIS BED, AND---
AAAIIEE! IT'S THAT GRAY DEVIL, AUNT TABITHA!

HOW DID SHE GET IN HERE? THE DOOR WAS LOCKED, THE WINDOW CLOSED! GET AWAY FROM ME! GET AWAY!


AND THEN, SUDDENLY HIS HEART SEEMED CLAMPED IN A GIANT VISE! A GREAT PAIN SHOT THROUGH HIM!
MY HEART! AN ATTACK! MUST GET PILLS...LEFT THEM ON BATHROOM WASHSTAND!

CATS... KNOW WHERE I'M GOING! GOING THERE AHEAD OF ME!

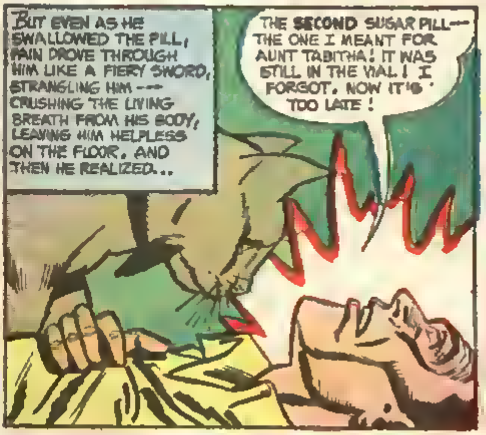
THE PILLS! NO, DON'T TOUCH THOSE PILLS!

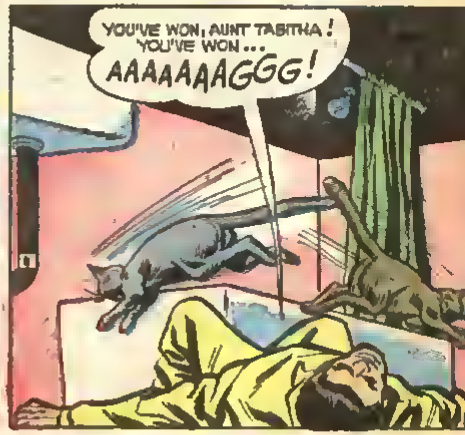
GASP! AUNT TABITHA--- SHE BROKE THE VIAL ...DELIBERATELY...
CRASH!

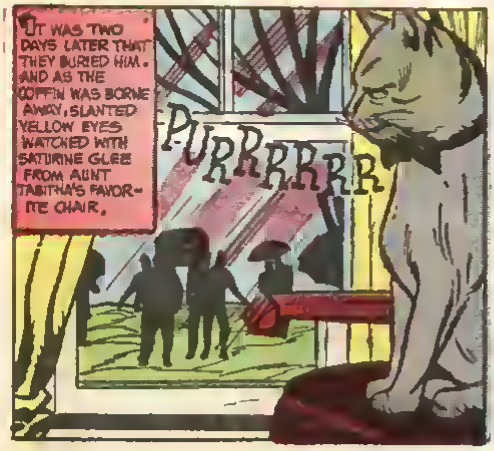
THE LAST PILL——IT'S ROLLING DOWN THE DRAIN...GASP! MY HEART...I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING...

YOU CURSED BRUTES HAVEN'T BEATEN ME YET! AUNT TABITHA'S PILLS! IN THE MEDICINE CHEST. I REMEMBER I PUT THEM THERE!

I'LL BEAT THEM! I'LL BEAT THEM!


BUT EVEN AS HE SWALLOWED THE PILL, PAIN DROVE THROUGH HIM LIKE A FIERY SWORD, STRANGLING HIM—— CRUSHING THE LIVING BREATH FROM HIS BODY, LEAVING HIM HELPLESS ON THE FLOOR. AND THEN HE REALIZED...
THE SECOND SUGAR PILL—— THE ONE I MEANT FOR AUNT TABITHA! IT WAS STILL IN THE VIAL! I FORGOT. NOW IT'S TOO LATE!


YOU'VE WON, AUNT TABITHA! YOU'VE WON... AAAAAAAGGG!


IT WAS TWO DAYS LATER THAT THEY BURIED HIM. AND AS THE COFFIN WAS BORNE AWAY, SLANTED YELLOW EYES WATCHED WITH SATURINE GLEE FROM AUNT TABITHA'S FAVORITE CHAIR.
PURRRRRR

NO ONE IN THE FUNERAL PARTY HAD NOTICED THE NEW CAT THAT HAD JOINED THE FELINE COTERIE... ANOTHER STRAY?!? PERHAPS... BUT IF AUNT TABITHA WERE STILL ALIVE, SHE WOULD HAVE NOTICED THE STRANGE RESEMBLANCE OF THAT COWERING BEAST TO HER NEPHEW... TYLER SPENCE!

Heart Of Ice

(Continued from inside front cover)

snowman the villsge children had built The light in the sky was dimming. Evening was coming on, and, with it, s sharp frost. Shivering with the cold, Eph raised his hand to smash in the door.

"Come in," a voice said from within. It was a small, almost still voice, quiet, without authority. Swallowing hsrd, Eph put his hsnd on the latch and shoved the door open.

"Come in, Mr. Stanton," Miss Alice said. She was small and thin, dressed in shabby, threadbare clothes. She sat in a small rocking chair by the firs, her hands folded sadstely on her lsp

He stared at her, his hands clenching and unclenching

"Yon still won't sall?" he asked, his courage failing him suddenly.

"Twice you've asked me, Mr. Stanton," she said quietly. "Twice I've refused. I refusa naw. I like it here. I like to wstch the children playing." She broke off and stared at his hands. "I see murder in your heart, Mr. Stanton."

"How the devil can you see anything?" he asked in fury.

"The people in the villsge say strange things of me," she mused, and then her voice shot at him like s steel rod. "Hss it ever occurred to you, Mr. Stanton, that some of them might be true?"

He stiffened snd s queer, cold shudder ran down his spine. Tben he laughed.

"You're nothing but a lying old woman," he grsted. "You prohshly spread stories to scare people, to frighten children." He opened his hands snd moved s step closer to her. But he stopped as a light blazed up in her eyes.

"I said you had murder in your heart, Mr. Stanton," Alice Msrkham said. "In your heart of ice. But it is cold hesrts that stop besting first." Her thin lips tightened. "You think I am friendless, that I am just an old woman, helplees in a chsir. Well, I am old. But I have lived a long time. The beams of my house, the stones of my field know me as I know them. If you hsrm me they will rise up agsinst you, they will svenge me, they will destroy you. All that is mine is your enemy!"

Eph Stsnton uttered s bellow af rsge and strode forward. With his right hsnd he pulled the old woman from the chair and shook her like s rsg doll. With his other hand he clutched her thin, scrawny neck. There was a sudden, sharp snap as be pulled her head forward. An instant lster he hurled the dead body from him and stood there panting, drowned in the sftermath of hloodlnst.

With terrifying abruptness, stark fear avercame him. What had the old woman threatened? That the very beams of her house, tbe stones of her field would rise against him?

For sn instsnt he crouched, as though the roof would come crashing down upon his head, ss though the walls would reach for him with splintery, wood claws. Then his voice split the still air with curses sgsinst his own credulity A hand shot out, grasped the chair Miss Alice hsd sat upon and smsshed it to kindling on the floor. Then he stood there, panting, triumphant, bellowing with laughter.

He knew he had won. Three steps brought him to the tiny kitchen snd a can of kerosene. Quickly he scattered it about the room and drenched the dead body in the remaioder. The tiny hut was ancient, dry as tinder. It could be a roaring furnace in ten minutes, a heap af ashes in twenty.

A kitchen match flared in his hand. He held it speculatively aloft for an instsnt.

Then it dropped from his hand. On the floor a blossom af fire sprang up, gave birth to a thousand more.

Eph Stanton took a step hackwsrd, gazing st his hsndiwork in satisfaction. Now untold wealth would be his. The interior of the hut flsred into violent flame, snd he rsn for the door, pushing through it with fierce energy

Outside the snow was still falling. It would hide his tracks, he knew, wipe forever from the fsce of the esrth the lsst evidence agsinst him. Snow and fire would combine to shield him. Swiftly he rsn forward.

The scream that hurst from his throat was throttled almost before he began. In front of him some kind of wall hsd risen, groping for him with srms, s lumbering mass with hideous life. But what could be white snd massive and have srms? He fell back and saw it advsncing on him. It was the snowman the children had built of the snow thst fell on Miss Alice's land. A streak of fiery words rsn through his mind again—what belonged to her would be his enemy, would destroy him. Neither the house, nor the stones had arms ta seize and destroy him.

But the snowman hsd arms. On thick, stumpy legs of gleaming white it shuffled towsrd him. Its eyes of shining hlsck coal fixed on him with infinite hstred. In them he saw the eyes of Alice Msrkham.

THE arms reached for his throat, fastened and clung. He died there, gasping, frightened, and then the snowman collapsed on him and melted in the heat af the hlasing cottage, drenching the corpsa with wster thst during the night would freeze into a rigid coffin, enclosing its dead heart of ice.

THE END

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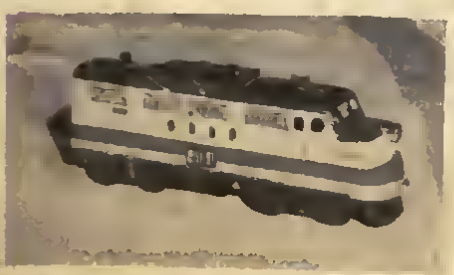

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